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"SAVING RAINDROPS FOR SUMMERTIME"

Broadcast No. 18 in a series
of discussions of soil con-
servation in the Ohio Valley.

WLW, Cincinnati

Aug. 27, 1938 6 - 6:15 p.m.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
Dayton, Ohio

SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain...

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

ANNOUNCER

In May, 1936, pastures in the Ohio Valley were dry enough to burn. As June wore into July, came scorching sun, hot winds, withering grass. Spring crops sprouted, curled in the sun, and died. Trees and shrubs budded and put out leaves, but the leaves fell on parched and crusted earth. Vegetation had gone with the drought. Farm reservoirs were nothing more than saucers of cracking mud. Cisterns went dry. Springs ceased to flow.

ORGAN: RAIN.

ANNOUNCER

The drought of 1936 was a crisis to thousands of farmers--even progressive farmers such as Tom Buckner, of Paris, Kentucky. Everyone knew that both Tom and his son, Brooks, were deeply concerned...

BUCKNER

I'm gettin' mighty uneasy about this water supply, Brooks. That pond is awful low, and it looks like we're goin' to have to start haulin' water from the river.

BROOKS

Most of the folks around here are already haulin', and they're plenty hard hit. The oil companies over at Paris have been helpin' a lot. They're runnin' their trucks day and night, and still can't take care of everybody. I tell you, Dad, I sure hate to see so many fellows selling their stock at rock bottom prices.



SOUND: Cattle bawling and bellowing, repeating occasionally during following sequence.

BROOKS

Those cattle are stirrin' up. I'd better go down to the tank before long.

BUCKNER

This is one time I'm sure sorry we have so much livestock. Cattle, horses, sheep, hogs--they've all gotta have water. I hear that some of the folks are going as far as 12 miles.

BROOKS

Guess they have to, all right. All the water left in the ponds is stagnant. And I've noticed that a lot of the ponds are filled with mud--silted up.

BUCKNER

That's where lots of us make mistakes. We build our ponds so they drain cultivated fields, and every rain washes the soil down into 'em.

BROOKS

And now our water supply gives out just when we need it most. Another trouble, Dad, is that a lot of us don't build our ponds right. We make 'em too shallow, and we don't take care of 'em, either.

BUCKNER

I saw a pond like that over in Nicholas County the other day. Built up on top of a hill. It caught the run-off from the barn, and was nothin' more than a cesspool--and a good breeding place for mosquitoes.



BROOKS

Well, guess I'd better look after the cattle. Oh, say, Dad....I hate to do it, but I don't think we'd better let the neighbors get any more of our water. We haven't got enough for our own stock as it is. I wish we'd built a real good pond in the first place...

ORGAN: RAIN.

SOUND: Porch glider creaking and swinging.

BUCKNER

Gosh, it's hot! Somebody's comin' up the road.

BROOKS

It's a pick-up. Oh, it's from the CCC camp.

SOUND: Pick-up driving up gravel road.

BROOKS

Yeah, it's Dave Shipp. I don't know who's with him.

SOUND: Car stopping, door opening and closing, men getting out.

BUCKNER

Come in, gentlemen, come in.

SHIPP

Hello, Mr. Buckner. Hello, Brooks.

BROOKS

Hello, Dave.

SHIPP

Mr. Buckner, this is Mr. Redmon. And this is Brooks Buckner, Clarence.

REDMON

How do you do. I'm mighty glad to meet you.

BUCKNER AND BROOKS

Glad to know you, sir.



BUCKNER

Come up on the porch. It's a little cooler up there.

SHIPP

I don't think there's a cool spot anywhere, Mr. Buckner, but I'm mighty glad to try to find it.

BROOKS

If you gentlemen will excuse me, I'll get a pitcher of ice water.

BUCKNER

Yes, do that, Brooks... What's on your mind, Mr. Shipp?

SHIPP

Why, I'll let Mr. Redmon explain it, Mr. Buckner. Mr. Redmon is one of the Soil Conservation Service engineers.

BUCKNER

Oh, yes.

REDMON

Mr. Buckner, the federal government is trying to meet this drought crisis. WPA has allotted funds to most of the drought counties. Now, we want to use this money to build model stock reservoirs, clean out springs, and do whatever is necessary to provide water for future use.

BUCKNER

I see. An excellent idea. But what can I do to help?

SHIPP

I was telling him about your farm, Mr. Buckner. That draw down there in the pasture west of the house would make a good spot for a stock reservoir.

BUCKNER

It sure would. I wish I had one there now.



REDMON

Of course, the pond won't do you any good now. But it will the next time we have a drought.

BUCKNER

I hope we never have another like this.

SHIPP

Don't we all!

BUCKNER

Here comes Brooks.

SOUND: Ice water being poured into glasses. Pause, as men drink heartily.

BUCKNER

Brooks, they want to build a stock pond down there in the pasture.

BROOKS

Fine. We sure could use one.

REDMON

Now, here's the point, Mr. Buckner. We wouldn't be justified in building a reservoir just for your use. Our plan is to use WPA labor and teams--picking the men and teams from right around here, and there are lots of men that need the work--

BROOKS

I'll say there are. This drought has just about brought on a famine.

REDMON

We'll build the reservoir, but the water'll have to be available to your neighbors in time of drought.

BUCKNER

That's fair enough.



REDMON

Here's the type of agreement we've been using. You might look it over.

SOUND: Rustling of paper.

REDMON

Right there, you see.

BUCKNER

..."in times of drought to make available to the public for agricultural purposes any water supplies developed by such conservation work." That sounds all right.

REDMON

By the way, there's another point here. Besides taking care of the present drought situation--as far as we can--we want to demonstrate proper methods of water conservation.

BUCKNER

Well, gentlemen, I think this is a fine idea. You can count on me!

ORGAN: Some song symbolizing working.

SOUND: Teams and scrapers moving, dumping dirt, etc.

BROOKS

Another hour or two and she'll be done, Dad.

BUCKNER

Yes, all that's left is smoothing up along that side.

SOUND: Thunder. Occasional thunder in following sequence.

BROOKS

Hear that? Something's going to come out of those clouds yet, you wait and see.



BUCKNER

I hope so. We can use all we get. And that spillway will take care of anything extra. It was easy to build, too, with all the loose rock around here.

BROOKS

Another thing, I'm glad we put this pond down here. It doesn't drain anything but this pasture, so it won't silt up.

SOUND: Loud clap of thunder, then heavy downpour of rain.

BROOKS (shouting)

Here it comes! Get those scrapers out of there!

ORGAN: SINGING IN THE RAIN.

ANNOUNCER

A joyful omen, indeed, was the heavy rain which fell as the reservoir was being completed. Today, 120,000 gallons of precious rainwater are stored in the Tom Buckner stock reservoir in Bourbon County, Kentucky. And Tom Buckner, and his neighbors who are to have free access to the pool, are now confident that when drought strikes again there will be an ample supply of clean, healthful water. Today, Buckner is saving raindrops for summertime!

ORGAN: SUMMERTIME.

ANNOUNCER

And now, here is Ewing Jones, of the Dayton regional office of the Soil Conservation Service. Ewing, we all know the 1936 drought was a harrowing experience, to say the least. But it looks as though farmers of 1938 are beginning to prepare for future dry periods.



JONES

Indeed they are, _____. The Buckner stock reservoir was only one of thousands built all over the country, and even now, more and more farmers are building their own ponds.

ANNOUNCER

But isn't it a man-sized job to build a stock pond?

JONES

Well, _____, it's not much harder than a lot of other farming operations. Almost every farm should have a stock pond, and almost every farmer can build one. Incidentally, I might mention that we have prepared a little mimeographed leaflet which gives some of the highlights of stock reservoir construction.

ANNOUNCER

It tells how to build a pond, does it?

JONES

Not exactly. As I said, most farmers know how to build them. They do make a few mistakes from time to time, and the purpose of this leaflet is to help them overcome those mistakes.

ANNOUNCER

May I see it?

JONES

Certainly.

ANNOUNCER

"Timely Tips for Stock Pond Construction." That seems to cover the situation, all right.



JONES

Yes, and we'll be glad to send a copy to anyone interested. Just drop a letter or a penny postcard to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio, and ask for the stock pond leaflet.

ANNOUNCER

Let's repeat that, Ewing. Write to Soil Conservation, at Dayton, and ask about building stock ponds. Right?

JONES

Right one hundred percent, _____. And now here's J. D. Parsons, agricultural engineer of the Soil Conservation Service, who had charge of the drought work in this part of the country back in 1936. He ought to be able to give us some good information on stock ponds. With him is Gene Charles, who also had a hand in the 1936 drought work. Gene, suppose you and Mr. Parsons take over.

CHARLES

All right, Ewing. J. D., time's a-wasting, so to speak. So let's skip the formalities and start right in on a few of the chief points to be considered in building good farm ponds.

PARSONS

Fair enough, Gene. Let's start off with the pond site. As you know, it's mighty important to locate a pond so it will get the right amount of water. If the drainage area above the pond is too small, you won't get enough water. On the other hand, if the area is too large, you may have a problem of overflow and waste.



CHARLES

In other words, it might require a larger dam or fill than is practical, and it might take a large outlet to handle the overflow from the pond. I know from what we saw in Kentucky and Tennessee last summer, that an inadequate outlet can cause a lot of trouble.

PARSONS

And another thing, remember the ponds that were full of mud instead of water. That mud results from two things. First, the pond wasn't deep enough--it didn't have enough capacity. Second, the drainage area selected wasn't protected by grass or trees or some other thick cover that would strain the soil out of run-off water.

CHARLES

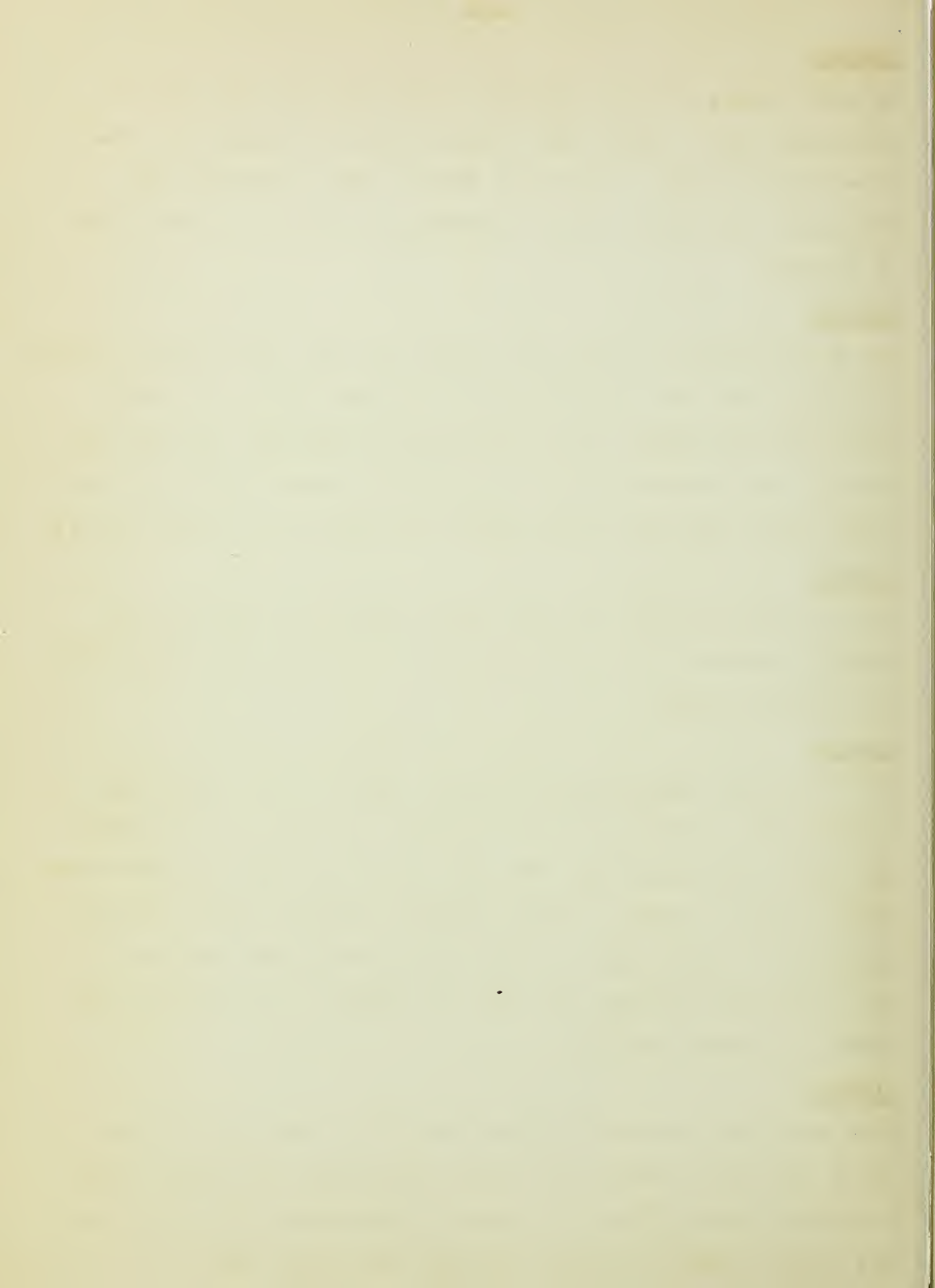
Hold on there, J. D. I've seen places where the farmer's most logical location for a pond was below fields that were best suited for rotation crops.

PARSONS

In a case like that, Gene, the farmer ought to use soil-saving methods like contour cultivation, strip cropping, or terracing. And here's another point. The pond should be fenced against livestock so that a strip of trees, shrubs, and grass can be planted around it to strain out any silt that may wash down from above. And if that was my farm, I'd want that patch of trees and shrubs there to protect wildlife.

CHARLES

Now, here's an interesting thing about these farm stock ponds, J. D. The Soil Conservation Service engineers have helped build hundreds of them, I've seen dozens of them myself, but I've never yet found a single one where the fill was washed out.



PARSONS

And the reason is that every pond was built with an adequate outlet--big enough to carry more water than we ever expected it to carry. In addition, every dam or fill was built high enough to prevent over-topping even if we had a cloudburst.

CHARLES

You made a point a moment ago that should be explained, J. D., or someone might misunderstand. You said that the pond should be fenced against livestock. Why build a pond that the stock can't get to?

PARSONS

That's a good point. You want livestock to get to the pond, but not into it. So build a chute or lane into one edge of the pond, just far enough so the stock will have plenty of room to drink. This kind of a fence keeps livestock off the fill and prevents them from trampling and fouling the water.

CHARLES

After all, we not only want plenty of water, but we want it clear and clean. How about piping water to a tank below the pond?

PARSONS

That's even better, and hundreds of farmers are doing just that. It doesn't cost much and really makes the pond more useable. It keeps stock out of the pond, saves trampling around the edges, and in the long run it saves water.

CHARLES

And now the depth of the pond. If I remember right, it should be at least five feet deep.



PARSONS

Your memory is perfect, Gene. If we reduce the area exposed, we help prevent evaporation--and deep water doesn't become stagnant and unpalatable as shallow water does.

CHARLES

I see. Water is lost by seepage, evaporation, and consumption by stock. If the pond is deep, it will reduce loss from the first two materially. Well, Ewing is looking rather impatient, so let's turn it back to him.

JONES

Thank you, Gene Charles, and J. D. Parsons. I'm sorry you can't take time to tell us about the need for protecting the outlet and other pertinent tips. But after all, they are included in that leaflet, "Timely Tips for Stock Pond Construction."

SOUND: Splashing of water.

FIRST MAN

Say, isn't this water fine! Does a man good to get away from the heat for a little while.

SECOND MAN

I'll say it does. Wish we had a good pond of clean water for the livestock, too.

FIRST MAN

Why don't you get that leaflet they mentioned on the radio the other night?

SECOND MAN

You mean the leaflet on stock ponds? By George, I believe I will. Now where did he say to write?



ANNOUNCER

Copies of the leaflet, "Timely Tips for Stock Pond Construction," may be secured by writing Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio. Next week, "Sweet Clover"...

SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain.

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away is an educational presentation of the Nation's Station.

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